

Exhibit A

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

CHAKA MATTHEWS,)
)
)
Plaintiff,)
)
)
v.) Civil No. 14-1330
)
)
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF)
CORRECTIONS)
)
Defendants.)

DECLARATION OF CHAKA MATTHEWS

1. My name is Chaka Matthews.
2. In 2011, I was incarcerated at SCI Somerset located in Somerset, PA, which is one of the prisons operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (“DOC”).
3. I began experiencing intense pain and swelling in his left heel and ankle in early 2011.
4. The pain made it difficult for me to walk the long distances required to access the different buildings on prison grounds where programs and activities occurred.
5. Due to the pain, I began placing all of my weight on my right foot to avoid putting pressure on my injured left foot.
6. At the time I was housed in cell number 55 on the upper tier of “EB” Unit at SCI-Somerset.
7. I was assigned to a top bunk in my cell.
8. EB Unit has two tiers of cells, which are connected by a metal staircase with metal grated stairs.

9. There are no elevators on EB block.

10. I had to go down the stairs to use the telephones to call home, to submit staff request forms, grievance complaints and sick call requests and to leave the unit.

11. Prior to my injury, I used the phone almost daily to call my grandmother, brother, sisters, and my father.

12. I had to remain standing while using the phone.

13. I was not permitted to bring a chair or stool to the phone to sit on while using it.

14. Because of my difficulty descending the metal staircase, and the pain that would be caused by standing for the duration of any calls, I rarely used the phone after the pain started in my foot.

15. I did not participate in various programs and services after the pain in my foot began because I was unable to descend the metal staircase safely.

16. I had significant difficulty walking the distances required to reach other parts of the prison.

17. Prior to the pain in my foot, I generally attended religious services at least once a month..

18. Due to my difficulties walking around, after the pain in my foot began I ceased attending religious services.

19. I was unable to walk the distance to the dining hall and eat my meal in the period of time allowed by prison officials, causing me to frequently miss meals.

20. As a result of the time limitation on meal movements, as well as my severe pain when trying to walk, I relied primarily on my weekly commissary purchases for food to eat.

21. Due to the pain in my foot, I was unable to walk the distance to commissary alone.

22. Instead, once a week, I would rely on another inmate to walk with me to commissary so that I could pick up my food purchases for the week.

23. I would walk next to the other inmate leaning on his shoulder for support as I hobbled across the grounds of SCI Somerset.

24. The other inmate would then usually carry my commissary back to the unit for me.

25. During this time, multiple corrections officers would make comments that I was moving slowly and was the last person to arrive.

26. At the time, I didn't know that the medical department could recommend my transfer to a unit that would reduce the distances I needed to walk.

27. In April 2011, I again visited the medical department because of the pain in my heel and difficulty walking.

28. I was given a prescription for Sulfatrim, but medical staff did not provide me with any mobility or housing accommodations.

29. During that visit, medical staff stated to me that I was now on "meals and pills."

30. I understood this to mean that I should only leave my cell to go to med line and the dining hall.

31. When I visited the medical department in May 2011, they prescribed me Prednisone but did not offer any mobility or housing accommodations.

32. The medical department prescribed me an aircast in the beginning of July 2011.

33. The air cast made it more difficult for me to climb into and out of the upper bunk in my assigned cell.

34. I told Mr. Hunter that I had a cast on his foot, which made it difficult for me to walk and move around the facility.

35. Even though I spoke with Mr. Hunter, and he could see my difficulties getting around, he did not assign me to a lower bunk or a lower tier cell.

36. Corrections Officer Arnone also regularly moved people around the unit to a different cell, bunk, or tier.

37. Corrections Officer Arnone also knew of my decreased mobility.

38. He refused to move me to a lower bunk or the lower tier when I requested it.

39. Around 9:00 p.m. on July 17, 2011, I was in the top bunk of my cell when “count” was called at the prison.

40. To descend from my bunk, I would awkwardly hop out of the bunk because I could not use the ladder with my cast.

41. I was unable to descend from the top bunk quickly enough, and failed to stand for count as required.

42. In mid July, I was prescribed a plaster cast and crutches.

43. The heavy cast and crutches made it substantially more difficult for me to walk and also made it more awkward and dangerous to climb into and out of my top bunk.

44. Even after being given a cast and crutches, neither the medical department, nor any DOC staff on my housing unit moved me to a lower tier or lower bunk.

45. I filed a disability accommodation request form on July 22, 2011, asking to be moved to a lower tier because I didn’t feel safe using the stairs on crutches.

46. I never received a response to this request.

47. I also submitted a sick call request asking for a wheelchair so that I could go to the cafeteria, attend religious services, and go to the other areas of the prison that provided programs and services.

48. Medical staff denied my Sick Call Request and took no actions to give me mobility aids, a change in housing placement or accommodations that would help me to get into and out of my bunk, and to access areas of the prison where programs and services were located.

49. The denial of more accessible housing and mobility assistance devices caused Mr. Matthews intense worry and constant fear that he would fall.

50. As a result, I remained in his cell the majority of the time.

51. On July 31, 2011, I attempted to descend the stairs while on crutches after leaving my cell on the top tier of EB Unit.

52. I fell down the entire flight of metal stairs.

53. After my fall, I experienced continuing pain in my back, neck, knee and toes.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I, Chaka Matthews, declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 26th day of September 2017.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chaka Matthews". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Chaka" on top and "Matthews" on the bottom, both underlined.

Chaka Matthews